

# The Builder.

No. CLV.

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WE look on the question as to the continuance or discontinuance of ART-UNIONS, as one affecting importantly the highest interests, as well as the arts and manufactures, of the kingdom. By spreading abroad a love of art, placing specimens of good art within the reach of all, and making the eye of the multitude familiar with forms of beauty, these associations cannot fail to be of the utmost service in the latter respect. The great end of art, however, is to civilize, refine, and exalt: art-unions enlarge its sphere of operations more than is practicable by any other means; and on this, the highest ground, therefore, should be aided by all who are interested in general education and the elevation of mind.

To talk of the evil of making good art too cheap,—of the danger of sending into the world twenty thousand finely-executed records of a noble action, or a beautiful effect in nature, instead of one, is not merely to talk sheer nonsense, but short-sightedly and unjustly. Our best authors who write, are producing for the thousands, and we venture to think that our best authors who paint, and our best authors who model, are quite willing to do so too.

The report of the Parliamentary Committee on Art-Unions, to which we briefly referred a short time ago, is a very interesting document; clear, eloquent, and convincing. Mr. Wyse, by whom it was drawn up, is entitled to great praise, and cannot be too highly complimented for the soul, knowledge, and ability it displays. The various parties who considered themselves injured pecuniarily by the operations of the London association, and artists who, needing no aid themselves thought all others were in the same position, were heard, but did not succeed in making even a personal case.

"Your committee have not heard," says the report, "even within the limited period allowed to judge of the operation of these societies, of any injury at all equal to those complained of by other bodies, under the influence of the changes which have been just noticed: on the contrary, the persons said to be most affected by the system have been most temperate in their evidence. The more eminent painters have more occupation, the more eminent engravers are better employed, the more eminent publishers have increased in their business: of the second class of each none have complained, with the exception, in the publishing trade, of the retailers, who, within a certain limit, that of the one-guinea print, appear to have suffered; all others seem to have received an increased impulse, instead of being crushed, as has sometimes been the case with other interests under great combinations. Your committee, therefore, feel themselves justified in concluding that the operation of Art-Unions, so far from suppressing or diminishing, has led to the extension and improvement of private patronage."

As to the great general advantages resulting from Art-Unions, the committee appear to have been unanimous—they could not be otherwise:—

"There seems no question that, even under present circumstances, Art-Unions have largely contributed to interest, at home and in the colonies, a great portion of the educated classes in the nature and advancement of the fine

arts. Were there, even for a time, to prevail an inferior description of production, with all the faults, both in subject and execution, ascribed to it, it must be remembered that the main point will still have been attained, the excitement and preparation for a new intellectual enjoyment to which, till lately, the large majority even of the educated public were strangers. In this point of view, the very cheapness which so many fear as tending to lower art generally, must be looked on as not only of good omen, but as the actively operating cause to produce the end of which all seem equally desirous. Were it otherwise, we should in consistency look upon the universality of the Greek and Etruscan vase in antiquity, the diffusion of decorative painting throughout Italy, as a disaster, and instead of regarding it as it was, and is, as a great stimulant, be obliged to consider it a great drawback on the improvement of art. It is the same in literature. There must be a cheap literature to prepare for a dearer. Unless the public at large sympathise in Art, and feel it to be an enjoyment, we shall never attain anything national in art, or have a public to appeal to. This appears to be more requisite in this country than in others. We have no substitute for the temple and bath of the ancients, nor for the palace and church of the Italians. Luter, a choicer and more fastidious spirit will arise, and a corresponding effort to meet or guide it. That these societies are now in a state to take such course appears unquestionable to your committee. They can, with the large influence already acquired from numbers and contributions, go far, not merely to stimulate, but henceforth to correct and direct public taste. This is not to be achieved by a mere amount of money taken out of other channels and thrown into what may be too often justly designated the picture market, nor by injudiciously stimulating and then as unwisely rewarding inferior, careless, and ill-regulated talent, nor even by the benevolent rescue from distress of the meritorious and modest, but by a well-directed and well-sustained course of proceedings, carried on through a judicious organization, and under well-secured regulations, having the encouragement of art, in all grades, but especially of the highest in each, for its ultimate end and object."

The objections against Art-Unions, made by such of the witnesses as were opposed to them, are drawn out in the report, and then swept away *serialim*, and after a number of suggestions for improving and extending Art-Unions (several of which had been made and adopted in the London Art-Union, long previously to the appearance of the report), the committee recommend that a Bill containing certain provisions to render them permanently subservient to the interests of art, should be proposed in the present session.

In accordance with this recommendation, Mr. Wyse has since brought in a short Bill for legalizing Art-Unions, similar for the most part to the Act for one year, under which they are now carried on. It has, however, this clause:—"Provided always, that a royal charter or charters shall have been first obtained for the incorporation of such associations, or provided that the deed of partnership or other instrument or instruments constituting such associations, and the rules and regulations relating to the proceedings of such associations for such purposes as aforesaid, shall have first been submitted to the consideration, and be approved of, by a committee of her Majesty's most honourable Privy Council, and a copy thereof deposited with such committee; and provided such proceedings for such purposes as aforesaid shall have been conducted in strict conformity with the royal charter or charters which may have been granted, or the deed of partnership, or other instrument or instruments, constituting such association, and the rules and regulations which may have been approved of, as hereinbefore set forth."

The Bill was read a second time on Monday last, and is ordered to be committed next Wednesday. To our great astonishment some

little opposition was manifested by one member of the Government, and it was arranged that it should be discussed in committee.

We cannot entertain the idea for one moment, that any serious opposition will be offered to the Bill in question, in the face of common sense, the mass of evidence brought together by the committee, and their unprejudiced and impartial deductions; we trust, however, that members who have not yet given the subject full consideration—if there be any such—will at once examine the report in question, and satisfy themselves of the great importance of placing Art-Unions on a sound and permanent footing without further delay.

In the London Art-Union, the subscription list for the current year was closed on Tuesday last, and the distribution is announced to take place on the 28th inst. The total amount will equal, if not exceed, that of any previous year: during the last three days no less a sum than eighteen hundred pounds was paid in single guineas at the office in Trafalgar-square. Mr. Wyon, R.A., has completed the Chantry medal, a beautiful work; Mr. Marshall A.R.A., is fast proceeding with the "First Kiss of Love," commissioned in marble by the committee; O'Neill's "Jephtha's Daughter" is being electrotyped; pictures of Mulready, R.A., Uwins, R.A., and Frost are in the hands of Dox, Rolfe, Heath, and Lightfoot; bronzes of Foley's "Youth at a Stream" are ready for the ensuing distribution, as are lithographs of Ward's "La Fleur's Departure." Cameos submitted in competition for the premiums offered for the encouragement of gem engraving, are under consideration, and many sculptors are preparing themselves to submit figures in competition for the five hundred pounds' premium, which the society propose to give next year.

## A COMMENTARY UPON THE LECTURES OF PROFESSOR COCKERELL.

THE chair of architecture at the Royal Academy is a post of great responsibility, and one extremely difficult to fill. In the small number of six lectures a year, it is expected that a subject should be treated, not less comprehensive in its range than any, that ever occupied the attention of a professor. The very quantity of matter, and its varied nature must alone embarrass the most gifted individual, just as an excess of ideas in conversation may often militate against perspicuity, in their expression. It is, in short, a duty from which much is expected, with the opportunity of doing a limited amount of good. We are disposed to entertain a high opinion of the manner in which Mr. Cockerell pursues his difficult task. His opinions have often run counter to some entertained at the present day; but no one has questioned his ability and learning, or the assiduity with which he advances the welfare of his profession. However we may sometimes differ in opinion, his lectures are not deficient in information, and are certainly eminently suggestive. On this account, we hope that the course just completed may be published verbatim, illustrated with the diagrams, in which the reports in THE BUILDER were necessarily deficient. Having said this much, we feel little doubt that our comments will be properly understood.

Mr. Cockerell's remarks on the importance of dexterity in the "language of the hand," every able architect must agree with. Much more might be said as to the ability, which many scene painters display in architectural design. Indeed, we have long been of opinion, that a higher degree of praise was due to these artists than is generally granted them. Some of them show an accurate knowledge of the architecture of remote ages, from which the architect may derive advantage. We allude, of course, to those whose talent is undoubted, for we do frequently see glaring instances of an observance of architectural synchronism, quite the reverse. Their designs, particularly in interior decora-

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